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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001524

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS BANGLADESH'S NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY

Classified By: Amb. Harry K Thomas; reason 1.4 b

¶1. (C) Summary: New Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin reiterated familiar BDG themes during the Ambassador's first meeting with him. Ambassador Thomas welcomed recent BDG actions to combat terrorism and encouraged Bangladesh to sign the nine anti-terrorism conventions to which it is not yet a party. End summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Thomas met March 30 for one hour with the new Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin and Director, Americas and Pacific Desk, Saqib Ali. Econoff (notetaker) accompanied the Ambassador. (Note: The Foreign Secretary presents his name as 'Hemayetuddin' (one word) although he uses the familial 'Hemayet'. Formally, he is addressed as 'Mr. Hemayetuddin' and not/not 'Mr. Uddin.' End note.)

¶3. (C) Noting the good bilateral relations between the United States and Bangladesh, Ambassador Thomas said he would like to build on our relationship. He cited recent positive actions by the BDG, including:

- Cooperation between the Home Ministry and the FBI in the Kibria investigation
- The BDG ban on Jammat ul Mujaheddin (JM) and the Jagrato Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and the arrest of JM leader Dr. Galib on charges of inciting violence and terror
- The arrests of several members of the Jammat Islami's violent student wing (Chatra Shibir)
- Steps to control the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) including the arrests of several members for corruption/abuse of power and the slowing (the BDG says halting) of extra-judicial killings by the RAB
- The rendition of a Bangladeshi-American wanted for tax evasion and flight to avoid prosecution
- Sustained cooperation from the foreign intelligence and national security services on counter-terrorism
- Continued work to prevent trafficking in persons

¶4. (C) The Ambassador encouraged the BDG to update local counter-terrorism laws that date from the British period and were meant to deal with domestic independence movements. Antiquated laws may mean currently arrested terrorists might escape conviction, become heroes and chill future government desire to pursue potential domestic terrorists, he warned. He pressed for Bangladesh to become a party to the nine remaining counter-terrorism conventions it has not yet signed. He also emphasized the importance of arresting and prosecuting Bangla Bhai.

¶5. (C) Hemayetuddin reiterated the PM and FM's pledge that the BDG will adopt and ratify the nine remaining UN Counter-Terrorism Conventions. He took note of the Ambassador's suggestion to update the counter-terrorism laws and reaffirmed BDG efforts to bring Bangla Bhai to justice, while repeating the BDG position that he has fled to India.

¶6. (C) More generally, Hemayetuddin, drawing on his recent experience as Ambassador to India, downplayed negative reports about Bangladesh from the Indian government and press, saying they had domestic political motivations, ignored similar conditions in India, and did not reflect the whole story.

¶7. (C) Hemayetuddin stressed Bangladesh's commitment to democracy and religious tolerance, while seeking 'understanding' that the process 'is not always perfect' and 'takes time.' He suggested that Bangladesh could help the U.S in its relations with other Muslim countries.

¶8. (C) Hemayetuddin dismissed the role of Jamaat-e Islami (Jamaat) and Islami Oikko Jote in the coalition in the usual way: If not with us, then they would ally with the opposition, and better inside where we can monitor them, include them in the process and moderate their actions, than outside the government and uncontrolled.

¶9. (C) Finally, Hemayetuddin renewed BDG requests for high-profile USG visits (he suggested Senator McCain) and a meeting for PM Zia with President Bush, possibly at this year's UNGA. Ambassador Thomas apprised Hemayetuddin of several upcoming visits, noted the unlikelihood of an UNGA bilat between Bush and Zia, but said a visit at another time would be possible if Bangladesh showed "unprecedented progress" addressing our bilateral issues.

110. (U) BIODATA: Hemayetuddin was born 21 June 1948 in Dhaka. He holds an MA in Sociology from Dhaka University (1970) and entered the Bangladesh foreign service in 1974. Most recently High Commissioner to New Delhi, Hemayetuddin has also served as Ambassador to Thailand, Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and additional international postings in Beijing (1996-1998), Washington (1991-1995), Brussels (1984-1987) and New Delhi (1981-84). Although a practicing Muslim, Hemayetudding received his primary and secondary education from a Catholic missionary school. He has two children studying in the United States, one at the University of Maryland and the other at Seattle University.

THOMAS